

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace paragraph [0001] with the following amended paragraph:

[0001] The present invention in its broadest aspect relates generally to a mechanism for fastening a first member to a second member and, more particularly, to a ~~one-piece mechanism~~ one-piece mechanism for attaching body molding to a side panel of a motor vehicle.

Please replace paragraph [0005] with the following amended paragraph:

[0005] The present invention relates to a ~~one-piece fastening~~ one-piece fastening mechanism which is preferably integrally formed with or otherwise attached to the molding or trim piece which is to be fastened to a housing structure such as the side panel of a motor vehicle. The present fastening mechanism includes a first opening which extends substantially the full length of the fastener and a second opening which extends transversely to the first opening and through the entire mechanism. The present mechanism is sized and shaped with respect to the first and second openings so as to be sufficiently flexible and resilient to compress when inserted into an aperture associated with a housing structure or vehicle side panel when pressure is applied thereagainst, yet sufficiently resilient to return substantially to its original position when the pressure is removed. The present mechanism is provided with resiliently flexible barbs or detents which engage the periphery of the aperture and hold it in place therewithin thereby securing the molding or trim piece to the housing structure.

Please replace paragraph [0008] with the following amended paragraph:

[0008] Fig. 3 is a ~~erossview~~ cross-sectional view of the distal end of the present fastening mechanism taken along line ~~3 of 3-3 of~~ 3-3 of Fig. 2.

Please replace paragraph [0009] with the following amended paragraph:

[0009] Fig. 4 is a perspective view of the fastening mechanism of Figs. ~~illustrating 1-3~~ illustrating the transverse opening extending through one side portion thereof and the barbs or detents formed thereby.

Please replace paragraph [0010] with the following amended paragraph:

[0010] Fig. 5 is a ~~outside~~ cut-away side elevational view of the present fastening mechanism that has been inserted into an aperture associated with a typical housing structure such as a vehicle side panel.

Please replace paragraph [0011] with the following amended paragraph:

[0011] Fig. 6 is a ~~erossview~~ cross-sectional view of the distal end of another embodiment of the present fastening mechanism.

Please replace paragraph [0012] with the following amended paragraph:

[0012] Referring to the drawings wherein like numerals refer to like parts, the number 50 in ~~Fig. represents~~ Fig. 1 represents a typical vehicle molding or trim member 50 having a plurality of fastening members 10 integrally formed therewith, the fastening members 10 ~~be~~ being formed and constructed in accordance with the teachings of the present invention. As best illustrated in

Figs. ~~the~~ 1-5, the fastening member 10 is of a ~~one construction~~ one-piece construction and is preferably integrally formed or otherwise attached to the molding or trim piece 50 for insertion into apertures associated with a housing structure such as the side panel of a motor vehicle. The present invention contemplates a ~~one mechanism~~ one-piece mechanism for attaching a first member to a second member such as molding 50 to the side panel of a vehicle. The fastening mechanism 10 is sufficiently flexible so that it will compress sufficiently when inserted into a corresponding aperture associated with the second member or a vehicle side panel when pressure is applied at its distal end thereby allowing the fastening member to be received within the aperture as will be hereinafter explained, yet sufficiently resilient to return substantially to its original shape when such pressure is removed. The present mechanism is provided with a plurality of barbs or detents 32 which hold it in place within the aperture thereby securing the molding 50 or other first member to a second member such as the side panel of a motor vehicle as will be likewise hereinafter further explained.

Please replace paragraph [0013] with the following amended paragraph:

[0013] The present invention is particularly suited for attaching molding or trim to side panels of motor vehicles. Although the fastening mechanism 10 can be separate from the molding or trim piece 50, it is preferable if the ~~one fastening~~ one-piece fastening member 10 be integrally attached to the molding or trim piece 50. Indeed, it is most preferable if the molding or trim piece 50 is molded with a plurality of the ~~one fastening~~ one-piece fastening members 10 attached thereto as part of the molding process.

Please replace paragraph [0015] with the following amended paragraph:

[0015] The function of the present mechanism 10 is to fasten the molding or trim piece 50 to a housing or side panel structure which contains apertures into which the fastening mechanisms are inserted. Accordingly, the present mechanism must be sufficiently flexible throughout at least a portion of its length to compress into the aperture yet to be sufficiently resilient to return substantially to its original shape after it is inserted therewithin. Further, it is important that the mechanism be strong enough so that it doesn't break during the insertion process or thereafter. This combination of strength, flexibility and resiliency is the result of the type of material from which the mechanism is made, its shape and size. Flexibility is provided by selecting a size and shape which affords flexing or bending of the distal end during the insertion process. For example, the length of the fastening mechanism 10 should be at least approximately twice as long as it is wide and should include flex or bend points or areas to allow for compression of the distal end of the member 10 during insertion into a corresponding aperture. The mechanism 10 as illustrated includes bend or flex points on two sides of the distal end. Such bend or flex points can be provided by a ~~six configuration~~ six-sided configuration, especially a fastening member substantially in the shape of a hexagon. Another embodiment provides bend or flex points by utilizing a ~~six configuration~~ six-sided configuration wherein the bend or flex points are separated from one another by a distance which is less than the length of the side of the present mechanism which does not include bend points. Other sizes, shapes and configurations yielding the necessary flexibility and resiliency are likewise recognized and anticipated.

Please replace paragraph [0017] with the following amended paragraph:

[0017] The present invention can be further understood by referring to the drawing wherein Figs. ~~2-5~~ 2-5 more particularly disclose one embodiment of the present fastening member 10, the member 10 including a body portion 12 having a proximal end 14, a distal end 16, a pair of closed side wall portions 18, and a pair of partially open side wall portions 20 as best illustrated in Fig. 4. The body portion 12 includes a first opening 22 which extends longitudinally through substantially the full length of body portion 12 from the distal end 16 to the proximal end 14. Distal end 16 encloses opening 22. Fig. 3 illustrates a ~~cross-section~~ cross-section of the distal end of one embodiment of the fastening member 10 wherein the distal end 16 includes bend or flex points 24 associated with opposed side portions 20 through which a second opening 26 extends therethrough as best seen in Fig. 4. The second opening 26 extends transversely through opposed side portions 20 of body portion 12 and through the first opening 22. In the embodiment of Figs. ~~4-5~~ 1-5 the cross-sectional shape of the distal end 16 is substantially a hexagon which forms bend or flex points 24.

Please replace paragraph [0019] with the following amended paragraph:

[0019] Fig. 5 is a ~~cut-away~~ cut-away side elevational view of the fastening mechanism 10 integrally attached to a molding piece such as molding piece 50 that has been inserted into an aperture 34 associated with a housing structure 36 such as the side panel of a motor vehicle. Detents 32 are spaced from one another and from the proximal end 14 (Figs. 4 and 5) and are provided to ensure that the fastening mechanism 10 remains within the aperture 34 after it has been inserted therein. During insertion, side portions 20 around opening 26 flex sufficiently to allow insertion of the distal end 16 of the fastening member 10 through the aperture 34, yet side

portions 20 are sufficiently resilient to return substantially to their original position after insertion. Detents or barbs 32 engage the periphery of aperture 34 after they pass therethrough and prevent the fastening member 10 from being pulled back through the aperture 34.

Please replace paragraph [0020] with the following amended paragraph:

[0020] Fig. 6 illustrates a ~~crossview~~ cross-sectional view of the distal end of another embodiment 38 of the present fastening member wherein the distal end 40 includes bend or flex points 44 associated with side portions 42 through which an opening similar to opening 26 extends therethrough. In this particular embodiment, the ~~crossshape~~ cross-sectional shape of the distal end 40 is such that the distance between the bend points 44 is less than the width of the closed side portions 46. In all other respects, the construction of embodiment 38 is substantially similar to the construction of fastening member 10.

Please replace paragraph [0022] with the following amended paragraph:

[0022] Accordingly, the present invention comprises a fastening mechanism for attaching a molding or trim piece to a housing structure wherein the fastening mechanism comprises a body portion having a distal end for insertion into an aperture associated with the housing structure and a proximal end attached to the molding piece, the body portion having a first opening which extends longitudinally for substantially the full length of the body portion and a second opening which extends transversely through the body portion whereby the body portion and the second opening define a plurality of resiliently flexible detents or barbs spaced from the proximal end of the body portion for maintaining the body portion within the housing aperture. By fabricating

the molding piece 50 and fastening mechanism 10 or 38 as an integral device, molding pieces such as molding piece 50 can be easily and inexpensively produced for quick and easy attachment to a housing structure, such as a vehicle side panel, without loss of fastening pieces or other complications. In its preferred embodiment, the present mechanism includes bend or flex points in a ~~six-sided~~ six-sided distal end configuration so that the fastening member is flexible yet strong.

Please replace paragraph [0023] with the following amended paragraph:

[0023] Although the present fastening members 10 and 38 have been described in association with a typical molding or trim piece attachable to the side panel of a motor vehicle such as the molding piece 50 illustrated in Fig. 1, it is recognized and anticipated that the present fastening members can be utilized in association with any first member that must be attached to a second member wherein the second member includes an aperture for receiving the fastening member. It is also recognized and anticipated that the overall shape of body portion 12 may take on a wide variety of different configurations other than the ~~six-sided configurations~~ six-sided configurations illustrated in Figs. 3 and 6. Still further, it is likewise recognized and anticipated that the shape of the transverse opening 26 extending through body portion 12 can likewise take on a wide variety of different sizes and shapes so long as the shape and size of the second opening in combination with the shape and size of the body portion define the plurality of resiliently flexible detents or barbs 32 which are utilized for maintaining the body portion or fastening member within an aperture associated with a typical housing structure.

Please replace paragraph [0024] with the following amended paragraph:

[0024] Thus, there has been shown and described several embodiments of a novel ~~onesnap~~ one-piece snap fastening mechanism for use in attaching a first member to a second member, which fastening mechanism fulfills all of the objects and advantages sought therefor. As is evident from the foregoing description, certain aspects of the present invention are not limited by the particular details of the examples illustrated herein, and it is therefore contemplated that many changes, modifications, variations and other uses and applications of the present invention, including equivalents thereof, will become apparent to those skilled in the art after considering the specification and the accompanying drawings. All such changes, modifications, variations and other uses and applications which do not depart from the spirit and scope of the invention are deemed to be covered by the invention which is limited only the claims which follow.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior revisions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A one-piece fastening mechanism for attaching a molding piece to a housing structure, said fastening mechanism comprising a body portion having a distal end for insertion into an aperture associated with a housing structure, and a proximal end attached for attachment to the molding piece, said distal end having at least two bend points, said body portion having a first opening which extends longitudinally along substantially the full length of the body portion and a second opening which extends transversely through both the first opening and through opposed side portions of the body portion whereby said body portion and said second opening define a plurality of resiliently flexible detents spaced from the proximal end of the body portion, said plurality of detents being engageable with the housing structure when said body portion is inserted into the aperture associated with the housing structure thereby maintaining the molding piece in attachment with the housing structure.
2. (Original) The mechanism of claim 1 wherein said body portion is integrally attached to the molding piece.
3. (Original) The mechanism of claim 2 wherein said body portion is sufficiently flexible to be compressed during insertion into the aperture of the housing structure when pressure is applied at the proximal end of the body portion during such insertion.
4. (Currently Amended) The mechanism of claim 2 wherein said distal end includes two bend points spaced in ~~parallel relationship to one~~ substantial alignment with one another such that said body portion is sufficiently flexible to be compressed during insertion into the aperture of the housing structure when pressure is applied to the proximal end of the body portion during

such insertion and sufficiently resilient to return substantially to its original position when said plurality of detents pass the periphery of the housing aperture.

5. (Currently Amended) The mechanism of claim 4 wherein said detents are spaced in ~~substantially parallel relationship from~~ substantial alignment with one another on at least two opposed sides of the mechanism.

6. (Currently Amended) A one-piece mechanism associated with a vehicle body molding adapted to engage an aperture in a vehicle side panel comprising a body portion ~~attached at its~~ having a proximal end for attachment to a vehicle body molding, ~~said body portion~~ and having a distal end for insertion into an aperture in a vehicle side panel, said distal end having at least two bend points, said body portion further having a first opening extending longitudinally substantially the full length of the body portion and a second opening extending transversely completely therethrough whereby said second opening defines a plurality of detents spaced in substantial alignment with one another on at least two sides of the mechanism and spaced from the proximal end of the body portion, said plurality of detents maintaining the body portion within the aperture of a vehicle side panel when the mechanism is inserted therewithin.

7. (Original) The mechanism of claim 6 wherein said body portion is integrally attached to said vehicle body molding.

8. (Original) The mechanism of claim 7 wherein said body portion is sufficiently flexible to be compressed during insertion into the side panel aperture when pressure is applied against the distal end of the body portion and sufficiently resilient to return substantially to its original position when such pressure is removed.

9. (Original) The mechanism of claim 7 wherein said distal end includes two bend points spaced in substantial alignment with one another such that said body portion is sufficiently flexible to be compressed during insertion into the side panel aperture when pressure is applied against the distal end of the body portion during such insertion and sufficiently resilient to return substantially to its original position when said plurality of detents are pushed through the side panel aperture.
10. (Original) The mechanism of claim 6 wherein the shape of the body portion at its distal end includes two bend points, one bend point being located on one side portion of the body portion and the other bend point being located on an opposed side portion of the body portion adjacent the transverse opening.
11. (Original) The mechanism of claim 10 wherein the body portion is substantially in the shape of a hexagon at its distal end.
12. (Currently Amended) A one-piece mechanism for attaching a molding piece to a housing structure comprising a body portion having a distal end substantially in the shape of a hexagon for insertion into an aperture associated with a housing structure and a proximal end ~~attached~~ for attachment to the molding piece, said substantially hexagonally shaped distal end providing at least two bend points, said body portion having an opening which extends longitudinally along substantially the full length of the body portion and an opening which extends transversely through said body portion, said body portion further having a plurality of detents spaced from the proximal end of the body portion for maintaining the body portion in engagement with the housing structure, the body portion being sufficiently flexible to be compressed during insertion

within the housing aperture and being sufficiently resilient to return substantially to its original position when said plurality of detents are inserted through the housing structure.

13. (Currently Amended) Decorative trim for attaching to a side panel of a vehicle comprising a trim piece integrally attached to the proximal end of a body portion, the body portion having a distal end for insertion into an aperture associated with a vehicle side panel, said distal end having at least two bend points, said body portion further having a first opening extending longitudinally along substantially the full length of the body portion and a second opening extending transversely completely through the body portion, ~~whereby said body portion and the shape of said second opening define~~ defining a plurality of resiliently flexible detents spaced from the proximal end of the body portion for maintaining said body portion within the aperture associated with a vehicle side panel when said plurality of detents are inserted therewithin.

14. (Original) The decorative trim of claim 13 wherein said body portion is sufficiently flexible to be compressed during insertion into the aperture associated with a vehicle side panel when pressure is applied at the proximal end of the body portion during such insertion process, said body portion being sufficiently resilient to return substantially to its original position when said plurality of detents pass the periphery of the side panel aperture.

15. (Currently Amended) The decorative trim of claim 14 wherein said two bend points are located in spaced apart ~~substantially parallel relationship to~~ substantial alignment with each other.

16. (Currently Amended) The decorative trim of claim 15 wherein said plurality of detents are located in spaced in-substantially parallel relationship from apart substantial alignment with one another on at least two opposed sides of said body portion.

17. (Currently Amended) A fastening member for attaching a first member to a second member wherein the second member includes an aperture, the fastening member comprising a body portion having a proximal end ~~attached~~ for attachment to the first member and a distal end for insertion into the aperture associated with the second member, said distal end having at least two flex points associated therewith; for allowing said body portion to compress during insertion into the aperture associated with the second member, said body portion further including a first opening extending longitudinally along substantially the full length of said body portion and a second opening extending transversely ~~to~~ through said first opening and through said body portion, said body portion and said second opening defining a plurality of barbs spaced from the proximal end of said body portion, ~~the distal end of said body portion being sufficiently flexible to be compressed during insertion into the aperture associated with the second member whereby~~ the shape of said second opening substantially contributing to the formation of said plurality of barbs, said plurality of barbs are being moved into engagement with peripheral edge portions of the aperture when said body portion is inserted into the aperture associated with the second member.

18. (Original) The fastening member of claim 17 wherein at least the distal end of said body portion is substantially in the shape of a hexagon.

19. (Original) The fastening member of claim 17 wherein said second opening includes opposed side walls which are tapered along at least a portion of the length of said opening.

20. (Original) The fastening member of claim 17 wherein said second opening includes opposed side walls, said opposed side walls having two tapered portions along at least a portion of the length of said opening, the intersection of said tapered portions defining said plurality of flexible barbs.

21. (New) A one-piece mechanism associated with a vehicle body molding adapted to engage an aperture in a vehicle side panel comprising a body portion having a proximal end for attachment to a vehicle body molding and having a distal end for insertion into an aperture in a vehicle side panel, said body portion further having a first opening extending longitudinally substantially the full length of the body portion and a second opening extending transversely completely therethrough whereby said second opening defines a plurality of detents spaced in substantial alignment with one another on at least two sides of the mechanism and spaced from the proximal end of the body portion, said plurality of detents maintaining the body portion within the aperture of a vehicle side panel when the mechanism is inserted therein, the shape of the body portion at its distal end being substantially hexagonal and including at least two bend points, one bend point being located on one side portion of the body portion and the other bend point being located on an opposite side portion of the body portion adjacent the transverse opening.

22. (New) A fastening member for attaching a first member to a second member wherein the second member includes an aperture, the fastening member comprising a body portion having a proximal end for attachment to the first member and a distal end for insertion into the aperture associated with the second member, said distal end having at least two flex points associated therewith, said body portion further including a first opening extending longitudinally along

substantially the full length of said body portion and a second opening extending transversely through said first opening and through said body portion, said body portion and said second opening defining a plurality of barbs spaced from the proximal end of said body portion, the distal end of said body portion being substantially in the shape of a hexagon and being sufficiently flexible to be compressed during insertion into the aperture associated with the second member whereby said plurality of barbs are moved into engagement with peripheral edge portions of the aperture.

23. (New) A fastening member for attaching a first member to a second member wherein the second member includes an aperture, the fastening member comprising a body portion having a proximal end for attachment to the first member and a distal end for insertion into the aperture associated with the second member, said distal end having at least two flex points associated therewith, said body portion further including a first opening extending longitudinally along substantially the full length of said body portion and a second opening extending transversely through said first opening and through said body portion, said body portion and said second opening defining a plurality of barbs spaced from the proximal end of said body portion, said second opening including opposed side walls, said opposed side walls having two tapered portions along at least a portion of the length of said second opening, the intersection of said tapered portions defining said plurality of barbs, the distal end of said body portion being sufficiently flexible to be compressed during insertion into the aperture associated with the second member whereby said plurality of barbs are moved into engagement with peripheral edge portions of the aperture.

24. (New) The mechanism of claim 1 wherein the length of said body portion is at least approximately twice as long as it is wide.
25. (New) The mechanism of claim 1 wherein said at least two bend points are located on opposed side walls of said body portion, said at least two bend points being separated from one another by a distance which is less than the length of a side wall of the body portion which does not include said at least two bend points.
26. (New) The mechanism of claim 1 wherein said at least two bend points are located on opposed side walls of said body portion, said at least two bend points being separated from one another by a distance which is greater than the length of a side wall of the body portion which does not include said at least two bend points.
27. (New) The mechanism of claim 1 wherein the distal end portion of said body portion includes opposed side walls, the shape of the distal end portion associated with at least some of said opposed side walls being concave.
28. (New) The mechanism of claim 1 wherein the distal end portion of said body portion includes opposed side walls, the shape of the distal end portion associated with at least some of said opposed side walls being convex.